DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 297 HE 027 314

AUTHOR	Webb, Janis
TITLE	Academic Support for Non-Traditional Students. Centre for the Study of Higher Education Research Working Papers, 93.7.
INSTITUTION	Melbourne Univ. (Australia). Centre for the Study of Higher Education.
REPORT NO	ISSN-1320-8438
PUB DATE	Sep 93
NOTE	52p.; Paper prepared in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education's Master of Education course "Higher Education Institutions and Their Functions." For related documents, see HE 027 308-318.
AVAILABLE FROM	Department Secretary, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3052 Australia ($10 Australian).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Academic Persistence; Academic Standards; Access to Education; *Ancillary School Services; *College Students; Educational Quality; Educational Trends; Equal Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Minority Groups; *Nontraditional Students; School Holding Power; *Student Needs; *Student School Relationship; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia; Diversity (Student)

ABSTRACT

Recent changes to the student profile in higher education and calls for improved graduation rates and better quality graduates have caused consternation among academics. Greater access to higher education by non-traditional groups is supported both ideologically and pragmatically. However, the disparate needs of such a student population has led to concern about the capacities of institutions and individual staff and students to meet the simultaneous calls for accountability. This paper argues for student support centers to assist transition to, and progress through, a course of study. A pedagogical stance appropriate for underpinning the operations of such a center is suggested, and the practical implications of the pedagogy are considered. Two propositions are discussed. First, initiatives which have led to the expansion of the student profile in higher education should be complemented by the provision of appropriate programs which assist students to meet the demands of study at the higher education level. Second, the approaches used by student support centers are critical for non-traditional students in linking educational access to academic success. Developing a cogent pedagogy to underpin the operations of these centers is essential, or else the services provided are likely to be ad hoc and consequently, much less efficient and effective. Contains 51 references. (Author/GLR)

ED 368 297

CSHE Research Working Papers 93.7

Janis Webb

Academic support for non-traditional students

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Centre for the Study of Higher Education
The University of Melbourne Parkville 3052 Vic. Australia

HE 027 314

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

University of Melbourne
Centre for the Study of Higher Education

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

CSHE Research Working Papers 93.7
Janis Webb

Academic support for non-traditional students

published September 1993

ISSN 1320-8438

The *CSHE Research Working Papers* series is published by the Centre for Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne, in order to disseminate the work of staff and students of the Centre, and to facilitate exchange with scholars in the field of higher education studies. For more details about the Centre and about CSHE Research Working Papers, see the back pages of this paper.

Copyright of *CSHE Research Working Papers* is held by the author(s). Reproduction in whole or part is permitted, for *bona fide* research and teaching purposes only, provided that the original source is acknowledged.

Academic support for non-traditional students

Janis Webb

Abstract

Recent changes to the student profile in higher education, and calls for improved graduation rates and better quality graduates, have caused consternation among academics. Greater access to higher education by non-traditional groups is supported both ideologically and pragmatically. However, the disparate needs of such a student population has led to concern about the capacities of institutions and individual staff and students to meet the simultaneous calls for accountability. The paper argues for student support centres to assist transition to, and progress through, a course of study. A pedagogical stance appropriate for underpinning the operations of such a centre is suggested, and the practical implications of the pedagogy are considered.

Two propositions underpin the paper. First, initiatives which have led to the expansion of the student profile in higher education should be complemented by the provision of appropriate programs which assist students to meet the demands of higher education studies. During times of economic constraint it would be 'false economy' if supports for students were given low priority because the individual, institution, community and national costs of high attrition rates or the lowering of standards are high. Second, the approaches used by student support centres are critical for non-traditional students, in linking 'access' to 'success'. Developing a cogent pedagogy to underpin the operations of these centres is essential. Without such a pedagogy services provided are likely to be *ad hoc* and consequently, much less efficient and effective than they might otherwise be.

Prepared in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education's Master of Education course 'Higher education institutions and their functions'.

Quality and accountability in higher education in the 1990s

The issue of quality in post-secondary education is a familiar theme of consideration by academics, governments, student groups, and representatives of business and industry. Debates and discussions around the topic have been conducted in Australia and overseas for several decades (The University of Adelaide 1978; Gross and Western 1981; Silver and Silver 1987). However, recent action by many governments around the world to restructure and reorganise higher education systems in an effort to ensure that they contribute to contemporary economic, social and political imperatives (OECD 1986; OECD 1987; OECD 1988; Marginson 1990) has sharpened the focus on the questions of quality and accountability. Loder (1990) highlights the current prominence of this issue and, writing with reference to the British system, she forecasts a situation which applies to other countries including Australia. She predicts that the three principal themes in the higher education policy debate in the 1990s, will be finance, quality and accountability.

Although it is possible to argue that throughout history post-secondary institutions have never been totally removed from the concerns of the wider community in which they are situated (Aitkin 1991), changes which are currently occurring are aimed at ensuring that higher education systems play a *very* active role in addressing a range of national concerns. In recent times governments have pursued this objective by simultaneously centralising the decision-making processes and devolving responsibility to individual institutions to devise the means by which they will meet centrally determined goals and objectives. Accompanying this increased responsibility is the expectation that institutions will provide evidence of positive outcomes with respect to the specified goals. Again Loder's comments are pertinent because she provides examples that reflect the Australian situation:

> 'Issues such as accountability to students, meeting the demands of industry and other employers, maintaining academic standards and financial accountability to the government and funding bodies will attract much attention as competition between institutions for students becomes much more severe in the early 1990s' (Loder 1990: xi).

In Australia, the government document which has brought about, and is continuing to affect, the most significant changes in the operation of higher education, is *Higher Education: a policy statement* -- the *White Paper* (Dawkins 1988). In this document the government articulated the means by which it would bring about 'far reaching reforms in the organisation and practices of the higher education system' (Dawkins 1988: 5). While these reforms have implications for both the research and teaching functions of universities, it is the issue of quality and accountability with respect to teaching and learning with which this paper is primarily concerned. More specifically the paper will consider the contribution that a student support centre may make to the achievement of positive outcomes for students participating in higher education studies. The central themes to the discussion will be:

* issues arising from particular aspects of the government's reforms which have consequences for both staff and students involved in the processes of teaching and learning;

* the question of whose responsibility it is to ensure that those admitted to a university have an optimum chance of successfully completing a course;

* an appropriate pedagogical stance to underpin the operations of a student support centre; and,

* the implications of practising such a pedagogy.

The paper will begin with an account of recent government initiatives which have inevitably had an impact on the processes of teaching and learning because they have instigated radical changes to the post-secondary student profile. Three policy objectives are relevant to this discussion: the expansion of the higher education system, an increase in the percentage of students from non-traditional backgrounds, and an increase in the number of international students.

A primary concern of the *White Paper* is the expansion of higher education opportunities to lift Australian participation rates towards the

levels achieved in the leading OECD countries. The impetuses for this initiative are the high level of 'unmet demand for higher education' and 'a combination of demographic, social and economic forces' (Dawkins 1988: 13). Expansion of the system is seen as a necessary feature of efforts to fulfil the government's aspirations of a 'clever country' and to facilitate improvements in access and equity:

> 'Improvements in access and equity are heavily dependent on growth in the system. Without new places in the system, it will be difficult to change the balance of the student body to reflect more closely the structure and composition of society as a whole' (Dawkins 1988: 21).

In addition to the *White Paper*, two other government documents have been significant in bringing about dramatic changes to the student population in higher education. These are *A Fair Chance for All: higher education that's within everyone's reach* (DEET and NBEET 1990) and *Change in Overseas Student Policy - advice to higher education institutions* (DEET 1989).

The discussion paper, *A Fair Chance for All*, was a joint publication of the Department of Employment Education and Training and the Higher Education Council of the National Board of Employment Education and Training, and was prepared in consultation with Commonwealth bodies representing disadvantaged groups and higher education institutions. Following the release of the *White Paper*, this document outlined national and institutional plans to ensure that people from disadvantaged groups would have the opportunity to participate and succeed in higher education. Specifically, the document

* defines the overall national equity objective for higher education;

* sets national equity objectives and targets for each of the groups identified as disadvantaged in gaining access to higher education;

* presents a range of strategies for each disadvantaged group to assist institutions in their planning; and

* outlines both the Commonwealth and institutional responsibilities in achieving national equity objectives (DEET and NBEET 1990: 1).

The groups targeted are people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, people from language backgrounds other than English, women, people with disabilities, aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, and people from rural and isolated areas.

The document *Change in Overseas Student Policy* provided a follow-up to *The White Paper's* reference to imminent changes to the overseas student policy. The document which was distributed in May 1989 took effect in January 1990. It announced:

> 'There will be no quotas placed on the number of overseas students entering Australia. Access will be limited only by the capacity of institutions to take such students after meeting obligations to Australian students under higher education funding arrangements' (DEET 1989: 1).

Collectively these three documents have contributed to a significant and rapid increase in the total number of participants in higher education and an unprecedented diversity among these participants in terms of their educational and life experiences, and consequently, their preparedness for higher education.

In tandem with these changes to the student profile, the government has expressed concern regarding two related issues, namely, graduation rates and the quality of graduates. Past inefficiencies in the system have been criticised and, as indicated below, have been seen as contributing to high attrition rates.

> 'The Government believes that future planning of the higher education system should place greater emphasis on outcomes. Consistent with this view, it expressed its own growth projections in the *Policy Discussion Paper* in the form of graduate numbers rather than intake levels. There are substantial inefficiencies involved when high numbers of students fail to complete their courses' (Dawkins 1988: 16-17).

In addition, there is an awareness that a more diverse student population raises a number of questions regarding the maintenance or enhancement of standards. 'An improvement in graduation rates ... need not, and should not, result in any lessening in the quality of our graduates' (Dawkins 1988: 17).

A survey of the literature reveals strong support, on both ideological and pragmatic grounds, for the government's initiatives to expand the system, deal with equity issues and enable more international students to study in Australian institutions. With respect to initiatives to increase the percentage of graduating secondary students who continue on to higher education, Aitkin expresses the view:

> '... the impact on society will be enormously for the better ... Australian society [will be] much more tolerant, much more rational, much better served by its mass media and its parliament and public service' (Aitkin 1991: 207).

In regard to the principles of equity, a 1990 SSCEET inquiry titled, *Priorities for reform in higher education*, expressed the view that:

> [Equity priorities are] 'important not just for social justice reasons but also to ensure that the background and life-experiences of graduates are increasingly in tune with those of the Australian community ... a higher education system which in any way resembles an enclave for a select socio-economic group is unlikely to be a useful foundation for a society faced with widespread consequences of rapid social and technological change' (SSCEET 1990: xvi).

In addition, many recognise the academic, social and cultural rewards, as well as the economic benefits, to be gained by enabling overseas students to participate in Australia's higher education system. Ballard (1992), in summarising a survey of the views of academic staff on the participation of international students in courses at the Australian National University (ANU), writes that there is a strong feeling that international students are essential to the international reputation of any university, because they facilitate international links, make valuable

contributions to the intellectual life of the university (especially graduate research students), and provide Australian students with the opportunity for contact with international perspectives.

Further, Ballard (1992) reasons that the presence of international students may contribute to an improvement in the quality of education offered to all. If staff reflect on how they might improve their effectiveness when dealing with overseas students they may well devise practical strategies which benefit all students in their classes.

In relation to responses to the government's expressions of its expectations related to standards, as would be expected, there has been much written to support the notion that quality of education remain a key concern of all with an interest in the activities of Australian universities (SSCEET 1990; DEET and NBEET 1990; Ballard 1992; Linke 1991; HEC 1992).

Despite there being general agreement on these broad issues, concern has been expressed about the practical implications of changes to the student profile on the ability of institutions and individual staff and students to meet performance standards. For example, the Higher Education Council expressed its discountenance with:

> 'There is no easy way to protect quality; and it must be protected as a less than first rate higher education sector will be of limited value to the community. ... The Council is concerned about output both quantitatively in terms of course completions and qualitatively' (HEC 1990: x-xi).

In addition, the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (1990) expressed its regret that the debate about the issue of reform in higher education has focused on the way the system is to be structured and controlled. The Committee emphasised that, in its view, the central consideration in reforming higher education should be 'quality' with respect to what students learn, how effectively they are taught and how well prepared they are to adapt to a world of rapid change. The Committee underscored its views by proclaiming that there is little to be gained by simply increasing the number of graduates if standards are not reviewed and strategies for addressing shortcomings are not implemented.

The challenge in meeting standards requirements arises in part because:

> '... concomitant with the disparate socio-economic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds of today's students, come varying levels of preparedness for study in the Australian higher education environment' (Webb 1991: 1).

To appreciate the consequences of these varying levels of preparedness on the teaching and learning functions of a university, it is useful to discuss in detail a number of student differences, and their accompanying difficulties. Careful consideration of these differences and their ensuing difficulties is vital to the development of an appropriate pedagogy for a student support program.

The nature of diversity among the current student population

At present, in Australian higher education, within any group of students, it is possible that there will be marked differences among them in at least seven general categories:

* English language proficiency,
* approaches to learning,
* insight into the 'hidden curriculum',
* familiarity with the milieu of higher education,
* access to external supports,
* attitude to the 'authority' of lecturers, and
* knowledge of the conventions of academic discourse and discipline-specific practices.

These differences are generated by at least two areas of cultural disparity: geographic, which informs the students' world view in general, and class, which dictates the students' responses to the prevailing economic and academic system.

English language proficiency

In the Australian higher education system where English is the language of instruction, varying levels of proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking English will affect students' academic performance. It will affect, for example, students' abilities to access information aurally from lecturers, tutors, practitioners, fellow students, and radio, television and video presenters; and visually, from printed media such as texts, journals, magazines and newspapers. In addition, it affects students' competence in effectively communicating their grasp of key concepts and issues through written assignments such as essays and reports, and oral activities, such as group discussions and class presentations.

Concern about the standard of student writing and quality of verbal communication has been expressed by a number of academics at leading universities in Australia. For example, Anderson of the ANU, in a submission to the SSCEET, commented that graduates in medicine, engineering, economics, science and other professional fields 'are not skilled in the use of the English language either as speakers or writers.' (Submission 28, cited in SSCEET 1990: 11).

Approaches to learning

There will be variations in students' experience of, and attitudes to, the acceptability of various approaches to learning. Ballard and Clanchy (1991), report that every culture encompasses attitudes to knowledge ranging across a continuum from the 'conserving' to the 'extending' and that each point along this continuum has direct consequences on the style of learning that is encouraged and valued within a particular culture. They identify three major approaches to learning, namely, reproductive, analytical and speculative (Appendix A). Within western academic culture it is usually expected that students will approach their undergraduate studies with an analytical approach, and postgraduate studies with a speculative approach. However, many students entering the system may have only experienced a 'surface' approach to learning

and have not moved beyond a reproductive mode to the `deeper' approaches of analysis and speculation.

It is important to note that, more often than not, students' approaches to learning are a reflection of the education traditions to which they have been exposed rather than an indication of abilities or potential. These traditions, in turn, are usually determined by the resources that are available. For example, if there is only one set of class texts, there is little point in asking students to compare and evaluate different writers' perspectives on an issue because the sources are not available to support the task. In such circumstances the education tradition is likely to emphasise a reproductive approach to learning wherein students are expected to demonstrate mastery over knowledge through memorisation and imitation (Ballard and Clanchy 1991).

Because various attitudes to knowledge have direct consequences for teaching styles, as well as for learning styles (Ballard and Clanchy 1991), and because the successful transition from one style to another may need to be carefully guided, a situation of a diversity of approaches to learning within a group is potentially very frustrating and confusing for both the teaching staff and the students.

Insight into the 'hidden curriculum'

Students will have different degrees of insight into the 'hidden curriculum' of higher education. Wilson (1981) points out that if students attempt to follow all the advice of every lecturer with respect to 'essential' reading, lecture and tutorial attendance, notes review, and assignment completion, they quickly find they are not able to cope. Describing a study (Becker 1961) of medical students at the University of Kansas, Wilson (1981: 47) notes, 'the students were able and dedicated, working extremely long hours, but they still found the work load to be overwhelming'. In consequence, in order to survive the system, students had to decide what was most important and 'selectively neglect' the rest. This scenario is one that occurs often in various fields of study in Australian higher education. Some students have greater insight and more confidence than others in making appropriate selections as to what will affect their performance and what can be neglected.

Students' insight into the 'hidden curriculum' is linked inextricably to their awareness of 'cues' given by lecturers. These cues

indicate to students those aspects of a course the lecturers themselves believe are *most* significant and should be emphasised or prioritised when students make their choice of topics for exploration and study and when they synthesise information. Successful students perceive the many messages, that are not overtly stated, through a number of channels of communication used by lecturers. The lecturers may convey these messages either consciously or subconsciously. Techniques for conveying such messages include assignment marking systems, course overviews, gesticual cues such as repetition or writing on the board, and paralinguistic cues of enthusiasm and so on (McCormack and Pancini 1990). Because not all students are alert to such cues, some are not able to monitor the lecture and tutorial processes as well as others. Those students who are not `cue aware' are most at risk of being overwhelmed by the volume of work which they perceive is required of them in order to succeed in their studies.

Familiarity with the general milieu of higher education

While it is not possible to present an exhaustive list of every relevant factor, several examples will serve the purpose of illustrating that assumptions about students' familiarity with the general milieu of higher education is pervasive and is a source of many difficulties. With respect to this 'familiarity', students will have varying degrees of understanding of: the formats of lectures and tutorials, the value placed on independent learning within higher education, the assumed background knowledge of curriculum material, idiomatic expressions and Australia's social, political and economic culture.

Many students who enter Australian higher education have had no previous experience of lectures and tutorials as contexts for learning. As a consequence, they are unsure of the purposes or objectives of these modes, and are unaware of the expectations the 'system' has of them as students in these contexts. It is sometimes the case that students, in the initial weeks of a course, do not realise that during lectures they should be making notes for future reference, or conversely, that it is not necessary to record every word spoken by a lecturer during a one or two hour session. In addition, students may not realise that tutorial sessions are designed for them to seek clarification of issues and contribute their personal views to the debate on the critical concerns of a particular field of study.

Many students are bewildered by the value placed on freedom, autonomy and independent learning. This may affect factors as wide ranging as uncertainty about `dress' requirements and time management.

Lecturers, especially those of technical subjects, usually assume that students have a certain level of background curriculum knowledge. This may not, however, be the case. For example, nursing students who are admitted to the course through special entry schemes may not have studied physics and chemistry beyond year ten, or for some time. The majority of lecturers, however, present these subjects in a manner, and at a pace, which assumes a familiarity with the terminology and the basic principles of the disciplines usually covered in years eleven and twelve.

Because students will have varying experiences with, and understanding of, idiomatic expressions, lecturers' efforts to clarify points through the use of idioms may result in further confusion for some students. Three examples of what might be said in an economics lecture or tutorial will illustrate this. Expressions such as: 'The state government is `up to its ears' in debt.', 'The treasurer "didn't come within a bull's roar" of a reasonable estimate of the deficit for the June quarter', and, 'Elliot has been "skating on thin ice" for sometime', will help to clarify and emphasise the point for those familiar with the expressions. However, those who are unfamiliar with such idioms will find the literal translation meaningless and confusing.

The final point to be made with respect to familiarity with the milieu of higher education is that students will probably not share a common knowledge of Australia's social, political and economic, history and contemporary culture. For example, reference to the Eureka Stockade, to the dismissal of the Whitlam government, or to the moratoriums held in protest over Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war will only enrich the understanding or appreciation of a point if students have a knowledge of the events and their surrounding issues. For many students, however, this is not the case because they have not been exposed to the culture in which these events are significant. Disparity in the cultural literacy of a group of students can present barriers for effective communication between lecturers and students. This point is illustrated by Ballard and Clanchy with a quote from an overseas student studying Commerce at ANU:

> 'One major problem is that tutors/lecturers assume we are all well versed in Aussie culture/literature/history/politics. ... This gives a big disadvantage to us overseas students' (Ballard and Clanchy 1991: 28)

Access to external supports

The fifth point to be made when considering the seven general categories of differences between students is that they will differ in the access they have to external support. External support may be derived from many sources. Two examples are networks of family and friends and access to material resources.

A network of family and friends can provide both psychological and practical support. This is most likely to occur if a student's family and friends have participated, or are participating, in post-secondary education. If this is the case, they have an understanding of the demands of study and know that it is time consuming and may be stressful. They also often have the skills to provide helpful critical comments during the processes of research and composition. For many students, however, the very nature of participation and equity means that this is not the case. Many students who are currently studying in higher education are from families who do not have a history or tradition of participation in education at this level. As a consequence, a student's family are often bewildered to an even greater extent than the student by the processes of higher education. In such instances networks of family and friends may have a negative influence on a student's progress. This occurs if no allowances are made for the time needed for research and reflection, and there is no diminishing of the demands to contribute to the running of the household or a family business, or to continue to socialise on a regular basis (Webb 1991b). Many students simply have no-one with whom to share the joys and burdens of study.

The accessability of material resources will also vary. For example, many students live in circumstances where they have a private place to study, an up-to-date home library and a personal computer. In contrast, other students share a bedroom with several siblings and any home study is done at the kitchen table with the hustle of the household occurring constantly around them. In addition, books may never have been part of the home atmosphere and continue not to be given high priority when

budget decisions are being made (Webb 1991b).

Students living away from home may be extremely disadvantaged in respect to material resources. Many such students do not have access to family financial support nor are they eligible for government financial assistance although their economic circumstances are not affluent. Those students who do not enjoy a sufficient independent income, have added to their concerns regarding the fulfilment of study demands those of meeting everyday living expenses such as rent payments and food bills. In order to meet their living and educational costs, many students must work to earn their entire income or to supplement an inadequate allowance. Further, time devoted to paid employment, whether full time or part time, and the physical, mental and emotional demands of working can distract students from study activities and consequently, adversely affect the quality of the assignments they present and their performance in exams. A recent study (CHES 1992) which set out to identify factors preventing effective teaching and learning in higher education, found that students rated lack of personal funds and having to work to supplement grants, among the main impediments to their learning.

Attitude to the 'authority' of lecturers

Many students realise that it is both appropriate and necessary to question and challenge the perspectives presented to them by their lecturers. However, this is not so for the majority of students. There are many reasons why students entering higher education do not share this insight. One reason is that within the wide range of secondary schools in Australia there are many that have an authoritarian approach to education and have not fostered in their students a spirit of enquiry which encompasses debate with their teachers. Students from such an educational environment often have trouble adjusting to the discursive nature of tutorials because they have not developed either the skills, or the confidence, to participate in public discussions or debates. Additionally, many students from families who do not have a tradition of higher education study are overawed by the status of university lecturers and see them as highly intellectual, insightful and so *au fait* with the subject, that discussion is inappropriate (Webb 1991b). Similarly, many overseas students transfer the education traditions of their home

countries to their situation in Australia. In Thailand, for example, the social, as well as the education culture, encourages students to see their teachers and lecturers as well informed and 'wise'. These educators have bestowed upon them by the community a role which they acknowledge to present `truths' to their students, while their students passively absorb the information that the educators are imparting (Ballard and Clanchy 1991; Webb 1992). These various attitudes to the 'authority' of a lecturer impinge on the behaviour of students in tutorials, on the approach that they will take to the preparation and presentation of written assignments and on the way students prepare for examinations (Ballard and Clanchy 1991; Samuelowicz 1987; Bradley and Bradley 1984).

Knowledge of the conventions of academic discourse and discipline-specific practices

The final point to be made in regard to the differences and difficulties which accompany a diverse student profile is that students' knowledge of the conventions of academic discourse will differ greatly. This can be illustrated with examples concerned with general conventions and with discipline-specific practices.

In western academic culture the accepted structure for an essay is that it will be presented linearly, in three discernible stages, namely an introduction, a body and a conclusion. This, however, is not the structure that is taught and valued in all academic cultures. For example, the Asian or oriental discourse pattern is said to be circular 'with the topic viewed from different tangents' (Clyne 1985: 128), whilst the Middle Eastern discourse pattern is characterised by parallel structures (Ostler 1987). Ballard (1991) notes that students who have been very successful in their studies overseas because they are highly skilled at structuring their ideas within a circular or parallel mode, will often find the transfer to a different structure challenging and may falter in their early attempts to meet the demands of an alternative structure.

In addition, western academic discourse expects that ideas will be presented in a formal language register which uses sophisticated structures and a range of interesting and precise vocabulary (Bradley and Bradley 1984). Again, while many students find it easy to fulfil these requirements, there are many who do not. For example, it has been suggested (Bernstein 1961; Poole 1976) that students from low

socio-economic backgrounds often have restricted language codes and are not as articulate as their more privileged peers. Many factors will contribute to an individual's acquisition of language prior to entering higher education including: the language models provided by family, friends and educators; the media to which the person has been exposed, for example, the radio and television programs and the newspapers, magazines and books which contributed to the general milieu of the home. Restricted access to models of academic language codes may prevent students from adequately demonstrating the extent to which they have grasped the complexities of an issue in written assignments and inhibit them from contributing to class discussions.

Students will also have varying degrees of knowledge of the discipline-specific practices of discrete fields of study. For example, students studying in multi-disciplinary courses will often be confused by the requirements of different subjects for various methods of citation. It is not uncommon for students, who are unsure of the requirements in this respect, to inappropriately draw on two techniques simultaneously in the one assignment.

To conclude the discussion of the range of students' preparedness and the difficulties that inevitably accompany such a range, it is appropriate to make the point that, it is unlikely that any student group was ever completely homogeneous; however, because the student mix for the first time reflects the diversity of the Australian society, with its substantial economic contrasts and multi-cultural character, the differences today are more extreme than ever before. All of the factors discussed above, and others, will affect the extent to which students are able to engage in the 'learning processes' and consequently will have a significant bearing on an individual student's chances of succeeding or failing in a particular subject or course. A number of practitioners reflecting on their professional experiences conclude that students from non-traditional backgrounds are severely disadvantaged when no account is taken of the disparity between their experiences and the assumptions that have traditionally been made about the education and life experiences of higher education students (Samuelowicz 1987; Ballard 1992). Educators, hence, are justified in feeling concern about how institutions, staff and students will be able to meet performance requirements.

Who is responsible for large numbers of non-traditional students meeting standards required?

From such concerns arise a number of moral and ethical questions. For example, who is responsible for large numbers of non-traditional students meeting the standards required for the successful completion of courses? Does the onus rest solely with each student to adjust to the values and conventions of the system; should mainstream academic staff reconsider their course content, presentation techniques and the assessment tasks that they assign; or, is it the role of staff of student support programs to ensure that students understand the requirements of the system and acquire the skills necessary for success?

On balance it would seem that, while students are ultimately responsible for their own learning, mainstream staff and student support program staff within institutions can, and should, facilitate students' learning.

Although the issue of the quality of teaching in mainstream subjects is beyond the main focus of this paper, it is appropriate that some remarks be made about this function because it is inevitable that the practices of mainstream academics will affect the practices of staff working in student support centres. Because the issue of teaching quality is a key theme in the quality and accountability debate, much has been written on the topic. Regrettably, although there have been numerous calls for improvement in the quality of teaching in mainstream subjects, students continue to express dissatisfaction with aspects of their educational experiences and review committees continue to be critical of the practices that they observe. For example, as recently as 1990 the SSCEET wrote:

> 'Evidence gave rise to doubts about the quality of teaching in the higher education sector. In many cases it appears that only lip-service is paid to the importance of teaching and that where promotion and appointments are concerned, much more attention is often given to numbers of publications and achievements in research. Despite attempts in a number of reports over a period of more than three decades to focus

attention on this problem, change has been very slow in coming. The Committee believes that the quality of teaching is a crucial factor in the education of graduates' (SSCEET 1990: xiv).

It is useful to consider why it is that students and committees continue to be dissatisfied with the teaching performance of many academics. Some insight may be gained by reflection on two related themes, namely, the attitudes of mainstream staff to their various academic roles, and the experiences of staff prior to their appointment to lecturing positions. The complexity of the issue of staff attitudes to their teaching role is reflected in the findings of two recent studies (McInnis study in progress; Ramsden and Moses 1992). McInnis, in an investigation of the work practices of academics at two Melbourne institutions of higher education, found that academics reported that they spent more time on teaching related activities than on research related activities, and that it was in the teaching role, rather than in the researching role, that they found the greatest intrinsic rewards. These findings, however, do not reflect those of Ramsden and Moses in their nation-wide survey, which examined the attitudes of Australian academics employed in colleges of advanced education (CAEs), universities and large technological institutions. Ramsden and Moses write '... university academics are oriented towards research, and are less committed to teaching' (1992: 285). While university lecturers form only one sub-group of those involved in higher education, it is nevertheless pertinent that there are many mainstream staff who give a secondary or lower priority to their teaching function. It is interesting to reflect as to why this is the case. Perhaps the explanation lies in staffs' perceptions of the activities which will be viewed most favourably when they seek tenure or promotion (Teather 1979; Moses 1988). With the conversion of many former CAEs and technical institutions to university status, there is a concern that staff in these areas will reprioritise their roles and will shift their focus from teaching to researching also.

With respect to mainstream staffs' prior experience it is significant to note that traditionally academics have been employed to teach in higher education because of their expertise in a particular field or discipline; few lecturers have had much training in pedagogical

principles, teaching strategies or classroom management. Ballard (1992: 8) notes that a consequence of this for teaching is that 'for the most part [academics] rely on the models and traditions they have inherited through their own experiences in our western university culture'. Such reliance, it may be argued, is inappropriate on two counts. First, much has been written to suggest that many models and traditions that are being imitated were never desirable in that despite rhetoric, they encourage a 'surface', rather than a 'deep' approach to learning and that they fail to make allowances for variations in learning styles. Further, they are unsuitable in the current climate for they do not take into account the disparate needs of the students which arise from their wide ranging abilities and levels of preparedness.

Given that further expertise is now required beyond what was appropriate when the student population was more homogeneous, it is now more important than ever that attention be given to the issue of staff development with respect to appropriate pedagogy, teaching methods and course management procedures. In *Priorities for reform in higher education* the Review Committee emphasises the importance of academics receiving training in teaching methodology which would:

> 'take cognisance of cross-cultural communication difficulties that may detrimentally affect the success of NESB learners',

and continues

> '[t]he Committee agrees that the special difficulties of learners of non English-speaking background - as of all disadvantaged groups - should be included in the issues covered in the context of [academic staff development] (Submission 117, cited in SSCEET 1990: 117).

It needs to be noted, however, that it is unlikely that improvements in the quality of teaching alone will be enough to surmount the difficulties and challenges that were described earlier in this paper. It would be unrealistic to expect that mainstream staff, whose primary focus must inevitably be on content, could address every issue that might impede every students' progress and development in a

fourteen week semester wherein it is likely that a class meets for only three hours per week.

Does technology provide the solution?

There have been some attempts overseas, particularly in America, to address students' varying needs through educational technology. This alone, however, has not provided an adequate solution. Frederick, Hancock, James, Bowden and Macmillan (1981), in a summary of approaches to student support, make the point that 'the earlier promise of technological packages and speed reading courses had not been fulfilled'. They point out that some programs had disappointing results, others showed little permanent gains for student participants, and most were inappropriate for those studying at the tertiary level. Maxwell (1978, cited in Bligh 1979) found that study methods packages were simply not enough. Bligh explains that they are inadequate because effective tertiary level learning is the result of a complex interaction between intellectual and personality variables. Smith (1978) and Da Costa (1979), add weight to this argument:

> 'Higher education lays particular onus on the student to work at the level of meanings, to search for new meanings and to revise old ones ... The danger with the 'isolated skills' approach is that the skills can seem irrelevant to the general concern of the student with this processing of meanings' (Smith 1978: 224).

and

> 'Study is essentially a most personal concern. No matter what techniques are tried and researched, they will be ineffective if they do not meet and bring together the needs of the individual person and the demands of the task. Study skills are there to be tried for size, reshaped, and fitted again and some bits discarded ... We are not automatic learning machines which need only to be feed the right program (Da Costa, cited in Hounsell 1979: 457).

The need for further interpersonal assistance, when students are grappling with complex issues which require high level cognitive skills appropriate to a higher education setting, is a point that is appreciated by many who suggest that centres which provide academic support to students should be fostered in institutions. For example, the *White Paper* states that among other concerns, institutions will need to address the following issues:

* the use of bridging, remedial and English language courses to cover existing gaps in students' skills and knowledge,

* the adequacy of current student support services, including ... tutorial assistance, and

* proposals to develop additional services and innovative programs to improve success rates (Dawkins 1988: 56).

In 1990, two years after the *White Paper's* initiatives had had a chance to take effect both SSCEET and HEC re-emphasised the need for institutions to provide additional support to students from non-traditional backgrounds through special centres. For example, in *Priorities for reform in higher education* the recommendation is made that:

> '..."study skills" units within institutions should be strengthened by the provision of extra staff and facilities. The Commission is aware that many of these units are of great assistance to students, not only in areas such as written expression but also in coping with academic problems generally. For this reason, the Committee would support proposals to strengthen their role' (SSCEET 1990: 42).

Later the same report acknowledges that while flexible entrance provisions now provide *entry opportunities* for some students who might otherwise be excluded on the basis of language proficiency, after being admitted into courses, a disappointingly large percentage of

students of non-English speaking background will fail to complete their studies. The report asserts that 'more effective assistance to such students' should be available 'during their course of study' (SSCEET 1990: 116-117).

These sentiments are shared by the Ethnic Communities' Council of New South Wales. In the Council's view:

> '... admission to courses *per se*, is not enough ... strategies must be developed and monitored to ensure that language/cultural deficits are addressed once a student has been admitted' (Submission 256, cited in SSCEET 1990: 117).

In addition, in *Higher education: the challenges ahead* the Higher Education Council follows an expression of its commitment to the maintenance of quality with this statement:

> 'The Council is concerned that support systems may not be adequate for some participants entering higher education from other than traditional routes' (HEC 1990: x).

In the same document the Council makes the point that as increasing numbers of students are drawn from groups that have traditionally not sought entry into higher education, the need will increase for wide-ranging support mechanisms. Further, the Council is emphatic that its view is that students should have access to appropriate forms of support with their academic studies (HEC 1990: 17).

From the above, it would seem that: (1) there are many issues to be addressed if standards are to be maintained in a system which encourages the participation of large number of students from non-traditional backgrounds; (2) that there is an appreciation that students should be supported in meeting the standards required; and (3) that there is recognition that mainstream staff should have the challenge of catering for the disparate needs of a diverse student population shared by student support staff. Given this, the discussion will now consider what could be the specific role, and what approach is appropriate, for a student support centre with a responsibility to assist students achieve academic success and whose functions are distinct from those usually available through student counselling services.

Student support centres: their role and some suggested pedagogical principles to underpin practice

The principal task of a student support centre should be to support students in meeting the objectives of mainstream courses. These are usually defined in terms of both cognitive and affective goals which encompass technical competence, critical thinking skills, creativity and effective communication skills (SSCEET 1990), as well as self-esteem and self-confidence objectives (Blaug 1985).

Student support staff can assist students to meet mainstream course demands by making explicit to them what the requirements and expectations are of the general academic culture and the cultures of discrete disciplines. Ballard (1991), in reference to the activities of those who work in student support centres when assisting first year and non-traditional students in various years of study, writes:

> '... we can best assist these students by making explicit not merely the content we expect them to master but also the intellectual skills and rhetorical styles that are basic to the discipline in which this information is grounded' (Ballard, 1991: 3).

In another paper Ballard explains the scenario that is likely to occur if international students are left to their own devices to decipher what is valued in Australia's higher education system:

> '... international students are ... confused because the implicit contact between teacher and student, in which they had confidence in the past, appears unaccountably to have broken down: the lecturers are no longer rewarding students for their hours of hard work and for their readiness to commit to memory everything they have been taught in class. Because they have not been able to `read' the changed expectations of their Australian lecturers, these students continue to memorise and reproduce, seeking ever more desperately for the single

`correct' answer and working over their textbooks and lecture notes for even longer hours. Yet such tactics are not likely to meet with success, if students have not also shifted to an analytical approach to knowledge' (Ballard 1992: 5).

Student support staff can also assist students to understand and employ efficient and effective strategies for meeting assessment criteria. For example, understanding the processes of research and composition is essential for students to meet the expectations of higher education study and produce quality work. Further, support staff can assist students to improve their written and oral communication skills. Finally, support staff may play a role in helping students to achieve a level of understanding of subject content which mainstream staff often assume their students already possess.

Basic foundation principles

Devising the most appropriate approach to the fulfilment of these roles requires the establishment of some basic foundation principles. The first point to be made here is that staff should provide practical support which contributes to the extension of knowledge and acquisition of skills by students. While empathy and sensibility are valuable, alone they are not enough. Students need to develop practical strategies for responding to tasks and, further to this, a confidence to use strategies independently.

Second, to be affective in their role of helping students to adjust to the demands of higher education, not only in the transition phase, but also as they attempt to meet the new challenges that arise as they progress through each year of study, it is fitting for support centre staff to have a 'humanistic' approach. Such an approach may be a refreshing change for students because, as Moses (1992: 15) points out, the current Australian viewpoint is that 'students are mainly seen as clients, customers and future contributors to the Australian economy'. In addition, because lecturers are currently under many pressures including: large classes, new institutional structures, heavier teaching loads, increased administrative demands and more competition for research grants, it is inevitable that the system will be depersonalised to some degree. This trend in Australian higher education, as it has moved towards a mass system, reflects experiences overseas. Trow (1973: 22), commenting on trends in

America during the 1960s and early 1970s wrote, 'There is little question that the 'communal' aspects of universities have declined.' The consequences of this depersonalisation is that many students feel alienated and isolated.

Freire (1972) and Rogers (1965), remind us of both the educational and personal benefits that emerge when educators adopt a humanistic approach whereby students feel valued and that their difficulties are acknowledged and responded to in a constructive way. Students often suffer both educationally and personally because, in a large system, judgements are frequently made about their potential on the basis of their current behaviour which has, as its foundation, past experiences which engender inappropriate responses to particular situations and tasks.

A number of academics and advisory committees have called for an increased emphasis on the development of pedagogical principles by mainstream staff (HEC 1990; McNicol 1992; Ramsden 1992). It is the contention of this writer that, for two reasons, attention to the development of a pedagogy is equally important for those working in areas which seek to complement the teaching role of mainstream staff. First, efforts to develop a pedagogy contribute to the discussion of issues related to a field which, because of its comparative newness, is not well understood or codified (Webb 1991a). In addition, without a pedagogy to underpin the operations of a support program there is a risk that, despite the best intentions, the work of such programs may be *ad hoc* and of little influence.

The development of a cogent pedagogy for a student support program requires the synthesis of a number of factors that have been discussed so far regarding: one, what are the objectives of higher education for the individual and for the community; two, what is understood about the values and conventions of general academic culture; three, what is known about discipline-specific cultures; four, what is understood about the challenges which might confront individuals who wish to successfully participate in higher education; and finally, what is known about practices which lead to the meaningful acquisition of understanding, knowledge and skills.

It appears that a *student-centred, in-context and holistic pedagogy* may make a substantial contribution to the creation of a nexus of the five factors listed above.

Student-centred

Freire (1972) holds that, if meaningful learning is to take place, students' educational experiences must relate to their existential experience. If this principle is applied to the activities of a student support program we see that a student-centred approach means making no assumptions about what it is that 'needs' to be 'taught' or how it will 'best' be taught. It involves giving students responsibility for their learning from the outset. In an initial meeting, a student or a group of students might be asked what their purposes are in attending, what they wish to learn and how they wish to approach the task. While the staff member may need to assist the students through the processes by presenting them with a range of options (Rogers 1965), ultimately it is the students who make the decisions about the program content and style of delivery. From this point a more effective program can be devised because the staff have a better understanding of the students' needs and of the students' perceptions of their own needs. Freire explains the effects of these processes on the relationship between the staff and the students:

> 'The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in their turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (Freire 1972: 53).

Further, because students are involved in the processes of negotiating programs, they have a sense of ownership which is usually accompanied by a sense of commitment.

It is relevant to note that a student-centred approach strongly rejects a number of conventional attitudes and approaches to the activities of student support centres. For example, although often used in reference to the provision of supports for non-traditional students (for example, Dawkins 1988; McNicol 1992), the term 'remedial' is considered to be inappropriate for two reasons. One reason is that it has pejorative implications in a higher education context because it raises doubts about the appropriateness of particular students' participation in study at a tertiary level. This is at odds with the notion of a 'humanistic' approach which emphasises the importance of acceptance and understanding

(Rogers 1967). The second reason is that it is inaccurate when applied to this field. The Macquarie Dictionary defines 'remedial' in the context of teaching as referring to programs 'designed to meet the needs of retarded, backward or maladjusted children'. Clearly this does not accurately represent circumstances of students from non-traditional backgrounds. The term usually has connotations of students, although having had exposure to particular material and concepts, having failed to achieve a certain degree of understanding. As was indicated earlier, the higher education milieu is often far removed from the past experiences of many of today's participants and it is from this that students' difficulties arise and not from students' lack of ability.

In a student-centred approach, students are encouraged to value their current knowledge and accrued experience and build on these to acquire new skills and insights. Hence, both the 'empty vessel' approach to teaching and the 'banking' concept of education (Freire 1972), wherein students are regarded as empty containers to be filled by material deemed to be appropriate by the teacher, are also rejected. When students are encouraged to value their current knowledge and past experiences their self-esteem and confidence are enhanced and this process, in turn, contributes to students reaching their potential.

Related to the idea that a student-centred approach rejects any term or organisational structure that marginalises the participants in support programs from the general student cohort is the notion that *all* students, no matter what their current achievement levels, should have an opportunity to improve further through the services provided by a student support centre. This means that students who consistently receive honours grades would also be catered for in their `pursuit of excellence' (Webb 1991a).

In-context

An in-context approach involves the academic supports offered by a student support centre having direct relevance to mainstream course requirements. For this to occur, account must be taken of students' changing interests needs and availability throughout the year. For example, workshops on researching and presenting case studies are best conducted during the weeks leading up to the submission of an assignment requiring this format. At this time, students' motivation is

high and they see participation as a worthwhile way to spend their valuable time. This approach takes advantage of what Dewey (1956) has referred to as the 'teachable moment'. At this 'moment' student interest is high because of the relevance of the theme to their current concerns. This point may seem obvious but it is not unusual for a student support centre to publish a program at the beginning of semester that does not take into account students' changing interests and needs. In some instances where this approach is used, student lack of interest and poor motivation are seen as the reason for poor attendances. However, it may simply be that students, in the processes of prioritising their time at a particular point in the academic year, have given low priority to workshop attendance, if the themes do not have bearing on the task immediately at hand.

An in-context approach not only involves the academic supports offered having direct relevance to broad mainstream course requirements, but also draws on material that reflects course content. Ballard makes a valid point regarding English language acquisition and in-context learning:

> '... pre-course English training can only be marginally effective, as the language skills are divorced from the specialised content and intellectual strategies which can only arise in the context of the actual course of studies' (Ballard 1987: 116).

The same principles apply to the 'acculturation' of any student to the specific requirements of a particular field of study. For example, a workshop on writing a psychology report would deal with requirements regarding structure and presentation as determined by the conventions of the discipline. This approach is a more realistic alternative to that where report writing techniques are dealt with in general terms with no account taken of variations in the requirements by discrete fields of study. The requirements for writing a psychology report are very different from those for writing a chemistry laboratory report, and to be successful in their studies, students in multi-discipline courses that include these two fields of study, need to be aware of the differences. It is also useful for students to have a knowledge of the underlying rationale behind why different disciplines have chosen particular ways of reporting.

Further to this notion of in-context support is the idea that to assist students to understand the application of the principles discussed for writing a psychology report, a model report would be useful, as would past students' reports with comments on their strengths and weaknesses.

> '... students should be given the opportunity to see examples of both good and bad examples of work in the discipline they study (students' essays and reports, journal articles) complete with criticism. This criticism should be focused on thinking/learning processes ...' (Samuelowicz 1987: 130).

To complete the discussion of an in-context approach to tuition a further strategy needs to be noted. Once students have drafted their report it is useful for them to receive critical comments before finally submitting the assignment for assessment (Murphy 1991). This facility is most helpful because students' initial attempts to meet requirements may be faltering while they work towards coping with the expectations of a discipline. This strategy provides students with the opportunity to receive formative feed back and helps also to defuse situations which lead to pressure for student support staff to provide a 'correction' service for students.

Holistic

The third element to be posited as appropriate for a pedagogy for a student support program is that support should be holistic. Holistic in this context refers to a concern for the integrated academic development of each student. Hence students' abilities in technical processes are developed concurrently with critical capacities and communication skills.

For example, a student or group of students may seek assistance with formating and composing a laboratory report for Mechanical Engineering. During the session, if it becomes apparent that the students are having difficulties in writing the discussion section because of a lack of understanding of underlying physics principles, the role of the advisor is to encourage students to explore their options for mastering these concepts. Included in the options may be approaching the subject lecturer for extra assistance or consulting with student support staff with expertise in that field. Discussion on the presentation of the report could then be

resumed later. If student support staff are able to facilitate students' acquisition of skills that are inter-dependent, the processes of learning can become much more rewarding for students.

Implications of practicing the pedagogy - organisational practices and procedures

In the discussion of pedagogical principles thus far, there has been an attempt to clarify each element by explanation and, where appropriate, example. However, a fuller exploration of the implications of practising the pedagogy in terms of general organisational practices and procedures is warranted.

To begin, it is appropriate for student support programs to be offered year round from January through to December. This enables students and staff to take maximum advantage of students' changing needs, interests and availability. In non-teaching periods students are often available to attend full-time courses to strengthen their skills and increase their confidence for both general and academic purposes. During the semester, as indicated, programs which are closely linked to course assessment tasks provide students with practical assistance to meet course standards. Related to this notion of in-context support is the notion that staff of student support programs should be assigned a discipline-specific portfolio and develop strategic plans for the offering of assistance to students when it is most relevant to their needs.

> 'With a particular focus, ... staff are able to develop a familiarity with the structure of mainstream courses and the nature and timing of assignment tasks, an expertise in the requirements of the discipline, and some insight into the knowledge which students entering and proceeding through a course are assumed to possess. Further, access to information on the outcomes of syllabus reviews enables ... staff to align their activities with the new orientation of the course' (Webb 1991a).

The assignment of staff to a particular portfolio provides the catalyst for strong collaborative associations between support centre staff

and mainstream staff.

Of equal importance is a spirit of collegiality within the student support centre. Collegiality within the centre provides opportunities to share insights into effective teaching and learning strategies. The synergistic effects of group process can be enjoyed when the staff, as a team, work together to devise and present general programs, for example, for summer and winter schools or for in-semester English language classes.

It is appropriate for a student support centre to combine a reactive and proactive approach. If staff respond to requests for assistance, their intervention may provide critical support for students who are at risk of failing. Often, reflection on the patterns for requests for aid in crisis leads to the identification of situations which regularly create obstacles for students. The staff of a student support program may then, in conjunction with mainstream staff, devise a program of assistance aimed at preventing difficulties before they arise.

The type of assistance which is most appropriate will inevitably vary according to the task at hand and the students' current skills. Flexibility in methods of delivery are therefore essential, for example, it may be appropriate for support centre staff to present a lecture which specifies the criteria of assessment and some guidelines as to appropriate approaches students should take. This would be presented to all students participating in a course to ensure all were clear as to the general requirements and expectations. As a follow-up to the general lecture, students could be given the option to attend workshops for smaller groups. In these workshops, students could discuss the requirements in greater detail, analyse a model answer, view past students' work and identify their strengths and weaknesses, and work through some practice exercises. These workshops could then be complemented by study groups where students apply the principles discussed to an assignment that is assessed as part of the course requirements. A study group may meet on a number of occasions to discuss processes appropriate to the completion of the task. At each meeting students would devise an action plan and set the agenda for the next meeting of the group. The final phase in a support program might then be to meet students individually to discuss drafts of the paper they are preparing for submission.

A final point to note is that, with the exception of presentations to

an entire cohort of students which specify and elaborate criteria for assessment, it is preferred that students are voluntary participants in student support centre programs. This is an important element of a student-centred approach (Rogers 1967) because the act of choosing to participate signals that students perceive that there are issues and problems that they wish to resolve. Voluntary students may be self-selecting or may be referred by mainstream staff who feel that certain students are at risk of failing. It sometimes occurs that mainstream staff wish to make attendance at a support centre compulsory. If this is the case, the terms and conditions of obligatory attendance need to be discussed with support centre staff.

Conclusion

To conclude, during times of economic constraint there is a risk that the provision of student support programs could be given low priority when budget decisions are being made nationally and within institutions. Such a stance, however, would be short-sighted and it could be argued to be 'false economy'. It is clear that with a more diverse student population there are great variations in students' preparedness for higher education. Unless support programs are provided to assist students to meet the demands of higher education study, it is inevitable that either high attrition rates will continue or there will be a lowering of standards. In both instances the costs to the individual, institution, community and the nation are high in both economic and societal terms.

If the concept of a 'clever country' is to be realised, our higher education system needs to produce graduates who are capable of contributing competently and confidently to their chosen profession. Australia's efforts to improve its current status in the world economy will not be achieved unless the rhetoric of politicians, their advisors and academics is matched by realistic strategies to improve student performance. Unless recognition is given to the realities of the challenges that both staff and students face and steps are taken to deal with them constructively, the potential benefits of a more representative student-mix may well be lost.

Trow's observations of the effects of diversity among students in

the higher education system in the United States in the early 1970s should alert Australian policy makers, administrators and academics of the possible negative effects of diversity two decades later.

> 'Relations ... between teachers and students no longer can be built on a broad set of shared assumptions, but are increasingly uncertain and a source of continual strain and conflict' (Trow 1973: 17).

As student support programs may provide the only link between `access' and `success' for students of non-traditional backgrounds, the development of a cogent pedagogy to underpin the operations of such a centre is essential. Without such a pedagogy, there is a risk that support will be *ad hoc*, crisis-orientated and, in the general scheme of things will contribute much less than it might otherwise do, to providing as many students as possible with the opportunity of reaching their potential.

References

Aitkin, D. (1991), 'Putting the sacred cows out to pasture', in Calluy, J. (ed.), in *Ockham's Razor*, ABC, Crows Nest, pp. 201-207.

Ballard, B. (1987), 'The other side of the export dollar', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 6(2), pp. 109-119.

Ballard, B. (1991), 'Cross-purposes in the tertiary classroom', paper presented to the National Conference on professional cross-cultural staff development, inside and outside universities, 2-4 October.

Ballard, B. (1992), 'Teaching international students: a new dimension in problem solving', paper presented to the Quality in international education conference, University of Southern Queensland, February.

Ballard, B., and Clanchy, J. (1991), *Teaching Students from Overseas*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.

Bernstein, B. (1961), 'Social structure, language and learning', *Educational Research*, 3, pp. 163-176.

Blaug, M. (1985), 'Where are we now in the economics of education?' *Economics of Education Review*. 4(1), pp. 17-28.

Bourdieu Pierre, (1988), *Homo Academicus*, (transl.) Peter Collier, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Bligh, D. (1979), 'An interim report to the University of Exeter', Teaching Services Unit.

Bradley D., and Bradley M. (1984), *Problems of Asian students in Australian language, culture and education*, AGPS, Canberra.

Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES 1992), University of London, *Identifying and developing an ethos in higher education*, Newsletter 2, February.

Clyne, M. (1985), 'Beyond grammar: Some thoughts on communication rules in our multicultural society', in Pride, J.B. (ed.) *Cross-Cultural Encounters*, River Seine, Melbourne.

Dawkins, J. (1988), *Higher Education: a policy statement*. AGPS, Canberra.

Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET 1989), *Change in overseas student policy - advice to higher education institutions*, AGPS, Canberra.

Department of Employment, Education and Training and National Board of Employment, Education and Training (DEET and NBEET 1990), *A Fair Chance for All: higher education that's within everyone's reach*. DEET, Canberra.

Dewey, J. (1956), *The Child and the Curriculum/The School and Society* (combined edition), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Frederick, J., Hancock, L., James, B., Bowden J., and MacMillan, C. (1981), *Learning skills: a review of needs and services to university students*, CSHE University of Melbourne, Parkville.

Freire, P. (1972), *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Penguin, Middlesex.

Gross, E., and Western, J. S. (1981), 'The Australian experience - unique or worldwide', in E. Gross and J.S. Western, *The end of a golden age: higher education in a steady state*, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, pp. 129-138.

Higher Education Council (HEC 1990), *Higher education: the challenges ahead*; NBEET, Canberra.

Higher Education Council (HEC 1992), *Quality in higher education: discussion papers*, AGPS, Canberra.

Hounsell, D. (1979), 'Learning to learn, research and development in student learning', *Higher Education*, 8 (4), pp. 453-469.

Linke, R. (1991), *Performance indicators in higher education*, report of a Trial Evaluation Study Commissioned by DEET.

Loder, C.P.(ed.) (1990), *Quality assurance and accountability in higher education*, Institute of Education, University of London, London.

Macquarie Dictionary (1981), Macquarie Library, McMahon's Point.

Marginson, S. (1990), 'Labor's economic policies in higher education', *The Australian Quarterly*, Spring 1990, pp. 256-266.

McInnis, C. (study in progress), *Attitudes of academic staff to teaching and research roles*, CSHE, University of Melbourne, Parkville.

McNicol, D. (1992), 'Institutional responses to mass education'. paper presented at the conference on the 'Implications of the transformation to mass participation in higher education, ANU, February.

Moses, I. (1988), *Academic Staff Evaluation and Development*, University

of Queensland, St. Lucia.

Moses, I. (1992), 'Unveiled: research findings on how university affects students', *Campus Review Weekly*. 2(10), March 19-25. p. 15.

Murphy, H. M. (1991), 'Learning legal language', paper presented at the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Conference, Auckland, September.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 1986), *Education and economic performance: a preliminary analysis of the issues*, OECD, Paris.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 1987), *Structural adjustment and economic performance*, OECD, Paris.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 1988), *Education and the Economy in a Changing Society*, OECD, Paris.

Ostler, S. (1987), 'English in parallels: a comparison of English and Arabic prose', in U. Connor and R. Kaplan (eds.), *Writing across languages: analysis of L2 text*, Addison-Wesley, Reading.

Poole, M. (1976), *Social class and language utilization at the tertiary level*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia.

Ramsden, P. (1992), *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*, Routledge, London.

Ramsden, P. and Moses, I. (1992), Associations between research and teaching in Australian higher education, *Higher Education*, 23, pp. 273-295.

Rogers, C. R. (1965), *Client-centred therapy - its current practice, implications and theory*, Haughton Misslin, Boston, chapter 9.

Rogers, C. R. (1967), *On becoming a person: a therapist's view of psychotherapy*, Constable, London.

Samuelowicz, K. (1987), 'Learning problems of overseas students: two sides of a story', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 6(2), pp. 121-134.

Senate Standing Committee an Education, Education and Training (SSCEET 1990), *Priorities for reform in higher education*, AGPS, Canberra.

Silver, H and Silver, P. (1987), 'The escaping answer', in Moodie G.C. (ed.), *Standards and criteria in higher education*, SRHE, Guildford, Surry.

Smith, M. (1978), 'Teaching to learn', *Studies in Higher Education*, 3(2), pp. 221-225.

Teather, D. C. B. (ed.) (1979), *Staff development in higher education*, Kogan Page, London.

The University of Adelaide (1978), *The defence of excellence in Australian Universities*, University of Adelaide, Adelaide.

Trow, M. (1973), *Problems in the transition from elite to mass higher education*, Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, New York.

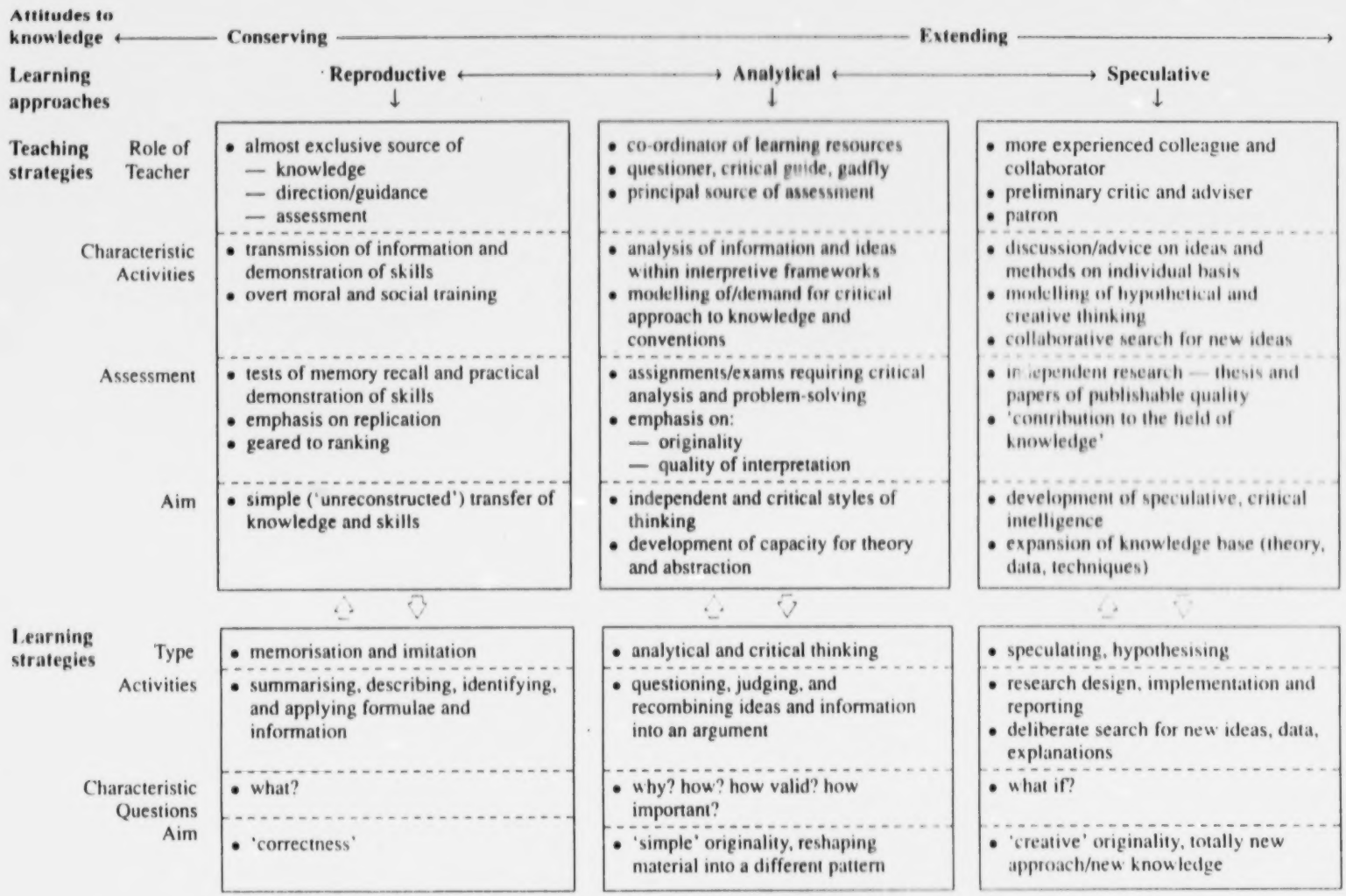
Webb, J. K. (1991a), 'University diversity: a unified system of suppport for a diverse student population', paper presented at the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Conference, Auckland, September.

Webb, J. K. (1991b), *Access to Success*, unpublished study, Victoria University of Technology, Footscray, July-December.

Webb, J. K. (1992), personal interview with group of Thai undergraduate and postgraduate students - various disciplines, Victoria University of Technology, Footscray, March.

Wilson, J. D. (1981), *Student learning in higher education*, John Wiley, New York.

Appendix A


Attitudes to knowledge
Conserving
Extending
Learning approaches
Reproductive
Analytical
Speculative
Teaching strategies
Role of Teacher
• almost exclusive source of
— knowledge
— direction/guidance
— assessment
• co-ordinator of learning resources
• questioner, critical guide, gadfly
• principal source of assessment
• more experienced colleague and collaborator
• preliminary critic and adviser
• patron
Characteristic Activities
• transmission of information and demonstration of skills
• overt moral and social training
• analysis of information and ideas within interpretive frameworks
• modelling of/demand for critical approach to knowledge and conventions
• discussion/advice on ideas and methods on individual basis
• modelling of hypothetical and creative thinking
• collaborative search for new ideas
Assessment
• tests of memory recall and practical demonstration of skills
• emphasis on replication
• geared to ranking
• assignments/exams requiring critical analysis and problem-solving
• emphasis on:
— originality
— quality of interpretation
• independent research — thesis and papers of publishable quality
• 'contribution to the field of knowledge'
Aim
• simple ('unreconstructed') transfer of knowledge and skills
• independent and critical styles of thinking
• development of capacity for theory and abstraction
• development of speculative, critical intelligence
• expansion of knowledge base (theory, data, techniques)
Learning strategies
Type
• memorisation and imitation
• analytical and critical thinking
• speculating, hypothesising
Activities
• summarising, describing, identifying, and applying formulae and information
• questioning, judging, and recombining ideas and information into an argument
• research design, implementation and reporting
• deliberate search for new ideas, data, explanations
Characteristic Questions
• what?
• why? how? how valid? how important?
• what if?
Aim
• 'correctness'
• 'simple' originality, reshaping material into a different pattern
• 'creative' originality, totally new approach/new knowledge

[Ballard and Clanchy, 1991, p.13]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

About the Centre for the Study of Higher Education

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne conducts research and consultancy on aspects of higher education; and provides higher degree courses on higher education, including policy, planning and leadership; teaching and learning; and interactive media and information technology. The Centre also provides a range of services designed to enhance the quality of higher education. It was created by the University in 1968.

Research presently being conducted at the Centre includes aspects of teaching and learning in higher education; evaluation and quality improvement; academic leadership; aspects of education and employment; national and international developments in higher education, including public policies; government/university relations; the academic labour markets; the academic profession and academic values; postgraduates and research policy; women in higher education; links between higher education and industry; education markets. The Centre's staff welcome collaborative research projects.

The Centre offers *services* in the following areas, with emphasis on the needs of staff at the University of Melbourne: the evaluation of courses and teaching; advice on academic leadership, and on managing a department; courses for less experienced teachers and new academic staff; seminars on postgraduate supervision, and on tutoring and demonstrating; the task force on large group teaching; assistance with visual materials used in teaching; a biennial workshop on other aspects of teaching; individual consultations on teaching; professional development seminars; departmental consultations. It also provides a full range of audio-visual services and actively collaborates with the Interactive Multimedia Learning Unit.

Director of the Centre: Professor John Anwyl

For further information on any of these matters, please contact the Departmental Secretary, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria, 3052, Australia.
Phone: 61--3--3444605. Facsimile: 61--3--3447576.

About the CSHE Research Working Papers series

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education publishes the CSHE Research Working Papers series in order to disseminate the research work of staff and students of the Centre, and to facilitate exchange on work in progress with scholars in the field of higher education studies.

Copies of individual Research Working Papers may be purchased at a cost of $A5.00 or $A10.00 each, depending on size. This charge includes mailing. A list of the CSHE Working Papers published in 1993 and previous years is provided on the next few pages. *Please ring the numbers of those CSHE Research Working Papers which you would like to receive and send this list, together with the form below, and your cheque, to:*

the Departmental Secretary
Centre for the Study of Higher Education
University of Melbourne
Parkville, Victoria, 3052
Australia.

Please contact the Centre for details of other CSHE publications.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

I would like to order _____ issues of CSHE Research Working Papers at $A5.00 each and_____ at $A10.00 each (including mailing)

Please find enclosed a cheque for $A_____ payable to the Centre for the Study of Higher Education.

CSHE Research Working Papers published in 1993

93.1 Carmel McNaught and John Anwyl
Awards for teaching excellence at Australian universities ($5.00).

93.2 Margaret Powles
Postgraduates at the interface between higher education and industry ($5.00).

93.3 Craig McInnis
Academic values under pressure' ($5.00).

93.4 Simon Marginson
Educational credentials in Australia: average positional value in decline ($5.00).

93.5 Simon Marginson and Seamus O'Hanlon
From the generalist courses to work: an annotated bibliography on generic skills ($10.00)

93.6 Ainslie Lamb
The discipline review of Australian law schools ($5.00).

93.7 Jan Webb
Academic support for non-traditional students ($10.00).

93.8 Ann Isaac
Equity or equality? students with language backgrounds other than English ($10.00).

93.9 Simon Marginson
Markets in Australian higher education ($5.00).

93.10 Craig McInnis
Graduate education in Australian law schools: some recent developments ($5.00).

CSHE Research Working Papers 1980 to 1991

(the cost of all papers published between 1980 and 1991 is $5.00 each, including mailing)

91.1 John I Balla
Learning for practice: What does a physician need to know to know medicine?

91.2 John I Balla & Margaret Balla
The evaluation of an international fellowship programme in the health sciences.

91.3 Margaret Balla & John I Balla
Student approaches to clinical diagnosis: Relationship to the process of learning.

90.1 Robert S Friedman & Renée C Friedman
A reflection on aspects of Australian research and higher education policy.

90.2 John I Balla, Margaret Balla & Andrew Stephanou
Measures of the development of clinical reasoning. The case of clinical analysis. Measures of clinical reasoning.

89.1 Margaret Powles & Kate Patrick
Recruiting honours students in the face of high demand for pass degrees: A case study.

89.2 Paul Ramsden, Geoffrey Masters, John Bowden, Gloria Dall'Alba, Diana Laurillard, Elaine Martin, Ference Marton, Andrew Stephanou & Eleanor Walsh
Speed, distance and time: A phenomenographic study of students' concepts in kinematics.

89.3 Paul Ramsden
What does it take to improve medical students' learning?

89.4 Paul Ramsden
Using aims and objectives.

88.1 Margaret Powles
Development of financial independence from the family - a model.

88.2 David Beswick
The outreach of higher education institutions in Australia.

88.3 Geoffrey Masters & Peter Hill
Reforming the assessment of student achievement in the senior secondary school.

88.4 Paul Ramsden
Learning as a change in conceptions: a relational view of language.

88.5 Gloria Dall'Alba
Two contrasting paradigms in research on student learning.

87.1 David Beswick & Paul Ramsden
How to promote learning with understanding.

87.2 Paul Ramsden
Improving teaching and learning in higher education: the case for a relational perspective.

87.3 John Bowden, Geoffrey Masters & Paul Ramsden
Influence of assessment demands on first year university students' approach to learning.

87.4 Geoffrey Masters
Comparing school-based assessments: a hierarchy of procedures.

87.5 John Bowden, Geoffrey Masters & Christopher Starrs
Student approaches to language learning.

87.6 John Bowden, Christopher Starrs & Terrence Quinn
Modern language teaching in Australian universities.

87.7 Margaret Powles & John Anwyl
Clienteles for distance education in Australia.
(Published in *Distance Education*, 1987)

87.8 Margaret Powles
AUSTUDY: taking the TAFE pulse in the early stages of the scheme.

87.9 Paul Ramsden, Geoffrey Masters, John Bowden & Elaine Martin
Assessing the elements of competence: a relational approach.

87.10 John Anwyl & Margaret Powles
Priority clienteles for external studies in Australian universities and colleges of advanced education.

87.11 Geoffrey Masters **Out of Print**
New views of student learning: implications for educational measurement.

87.12 Paul Ramsden, Elaine Martin & John Bowden
Approaches to studying in different school environments.

87.13 Viswanathan Selvaratnam
Student mobility within the Commonwealth: growing con-straints, new initiatives.

87.14 John Anwyl **Out of Print**
Adjusting to the post-binary era.

87.15 David Penington
University teaching and learning.

87.16 David Beswick
The role of government in higher education in Australia.

87.17 David Beswick
Prospects for the 90s - a new phase of development in Australian higher education.

86.1 David Beswick & Judith Boreham
Development of scientific interests and competence.

86.2 Gerald Burke
Reforming the structure and finance of education in Australia.

86.3 Margaret Powles
A matter of account: Young students' income and expenditure patterns and the development of independence from parents.

86.4 John Bowden & Paul Ramsden
Assessment practices and student learning.

86.5 John Anwyl & John Bowden
Attitudes of Australian university and college academics to some access and equity issues, including distance education.
(Published in *Distance Education*, No 1, 1986)

85.1 David Beswick
Family support for students - expectations and realities.

85.2 David Beswick **Out of Print**
Current issues in student selection.

85.3 David Beswick
Trends in Australian higher education research: a general review.

85.4 David Beswick & Judith Boreham
Women's success and perspective on careers.

85.5 Paul Ramsden, David Beswick & John Bowden
Do learning skills interventions have any effect on student learning?

85.6 Hilary Schofield & Margaret Parnaby
Sex differences in the preference for humanities or science courses: a retrospective study of tertiary students.

85.7 Urban Dahllof
Towards a contextual rationale of distance higher education: the small scale cases of Sweden and Australia.
(Published in *Distance Higher Education and the Adult Learner*, Dutch Open University, Heerlen, 1986, pp 126-146)

85.8 John Bowden
Some institutional policy issued in the development of the use of computers in tertiary teaching and learning.

84.1 * John Bowden & Christopher Starrs **Out of Print**
Language departments in Australian universities and colleges of advanced education.

84.2 Grant Harman
Australian experience with co-ordinating agencies for tertiary education.
(Published in *Higher Education*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, Vol 13, No 5, October 1984, pp 501-515)

83.1 David Beswick, Hilary Schofield & Judith Boreham
The participation of women in higher education: signs of progress and regression.

83.2 David R Jones
Academic government: the creation of the civic university model.

83.3 Grant Harman
The erosion of university independence: recent Australian experience.
(Published in *Higher Education*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, Vol 12, No 5, October 1983, pp 501-518)

83.4 * See 86.1

83.5 John Anwyl & John Bowden
Some characteristics and attitudes of academics in Australian universities and colleges of advanced education.
(Published in *Higher Education Research Development*, Vol 2, No 1, 1983, pp 39-62)

83.6 David Beswick
Financial support for the young in tertiary education.

83.7 David Beswick & Grant Harman
Education policy in Australia.

83.8 Donald Layton
The utilization of the policy sciences in training educational administrators.

83.9 David R Jones
Sea change: British models and colonial modifications in higher education.

83.10 Grant Harman **Out of Print**
The white paper and planned change for education in Victorian government schools.

83.11 David R Jones
A century of exoticism: Australian universities 1850 to 1950.

82.1 Edward Holdaway
The relationship between research in education and policy formation.

82.2 R J Ryan
The administration of technical and further education in the Australian Capital Territory.

82.3 R J Ryan
The administration of technical and further education in Victoria.

82.4 Grant Harman **Out of Print**
The education policy process at state level: report of Australian-United States comparative study.
(Published in Hancock, Kirst & Grussman (eds): *Contemporary Issues in Education Policy: Perspectives from Australia and USA*. Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra and McCutcheon, Berkley, 1983)

82.5 Grant Harman
Australian management educators and the "Ralph Report".
(Abridged version published in *The Practising Manager*, Vol 3, No 1, October 1982, pp 38-42)

82.6 John Bowden & John Anwyl
Attitudes of Australian academics to staff development.

82.7 * Not published **No Print**

82.8 Matti Urvet
Development of public educational services in the Northern Territory, 1876-1979.

82.9 David Beswick **Out of Print**
The changing student population in Australia from the seventies to the eighties.
(Published in *Journal of Tertiary Education Administration*, Vol 5, No 1, May 1983, pp 5-19)

81.1 Terrence Dunn
Bias in HSC scores and equity of access to universities: a study of entry to the University of Melbourne.
(Published in *The Australian Journal of Education*, Vol 26, 1982, pp 190-208)

81.2 Lynn Meek
A theoretical model for examining the structure and function of the university as an organization or community.
(Published as a chapter in V Lynn Meek: *The University of Papua New Guinea: A Case Study in the Sociology of Higher Education*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1982)

81.3 Terrence Dunn
Sex differences in the prediction of first year results in arts and science at the University of Melbourne.

81.4 Lynn Meek
The case study method and the analysis of the university organization in new nations.
(Published as a chapter in V Lynn Meek: *The University of Papua New Guinea: A Case Study in the Sociology of Higher Education*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1982)

81.5 Grant Harman
The razor gang decisions, the guidelines to the Commonwealth Education Commission and Australian education policy.
(Published in Vestes: *The Australian Universities' Review*, Vol 24, No 2, 1981)

81.6 Grant Harman
Decision dilemmas at Barton CAE: a case study

81.7 Cicely Watson
Links between education and work: the Canadian and Ontario experience.

81.8 Leith Hancock & John Bowden
Learning skills for life at a tertiary institution.
(Published in W Appleton (ed): *Student groups and their needs*. Melbourne, 1982, Section 11, pp 101-117)

81.9 John Bowden & John Anwyl
Some correlates of attitudes of Australian university academics towards access to tertiary education.

80.1 John Bowden
Background and work patterns of teachers in Australian Technical and Further Education.
(Published in two parts in *TAFE Quarterly*, Vol 1, No 3, 1979 and Vol 2, No 1, 1980)

80.2 Grant Harman
The Financing and control of Australian tertiary education: the roles of federal and state government.
(Published in G Harman and D Smart (eds): *Federal Intervention in Australian Education: Past, Present and Future*. Georgian House, Melbourne, 1982, pp 85-111)

80.3 David Beswick
Higher education and the rural drift in Australia.

80.4 Martin Hayden
Financial assistance to tertiary education students: a review of recent literature and research.
(Published as Volume 2 in the *Studies of Tertiary Finances*. Series of the Commonwealth Department of Education, by the Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1981)

80.5 Grant Harman
Exploring politics in education: some barriers and some theoretical considerations.
(Published in P B Botsman (ed): *The Politics of Education. The Australian College of Education*. Carlton, 1980, pp 123-151)

80.6 R K Browne
Commonwealth-State relations in education: trends and tensions.

80.7 John Bowden & Loris Perry
Women teachers in Australian Technical and Further Education.
(Published in Bradley, Browne, Ducker & Moore (eds): *ACT Papers in Technical and Further Education*. Canberra, 1982, pp 95-104)

Centre for the Study of Higher Education
University of Melbourne
Parkville, Vic. 3052 Australia

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education is an academic department of the University in the Faculty of Education. Its responsibilities include:

- ☐ research into the problems of higher education institutions and systems;
- ☐ research and evaluation studies for the University;
- ☐ graduate studies, leading to the degrees of Master of Education in Higher Education, and Doctor of Philosophy;
- ☐ staff development and educational technology services to University staff; and
- ☐ consultancy services on problems in higher education.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE